

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

26TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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NEW YORK AWARDED \$100,000 GRANT FOR FARMERS' MARKET TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

HINCHEY EARMARKED FUNDS IN FY '02 SPENDING BILL

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-26) today announced that New York State has received a \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The grant, which will help to expand a demonstration project for wireless technology at farmers' markets in the state, was funded by an earmark Hinchey placed in the Agriculture Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2002.

"Farmers' markets are a tremendous asset to farmers in the district I represent and throughout the state," said Hinchey. "The farmers' market nutrition programs also provide a great way for senior citizens and low-income families to purchase healthy, nutritious food. This grant will give farmers' markets technology that will help those programs thrive even more."

As a member of the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, Hinchey has been a strong supporter of farmers' markets and the nutrition programs. Through his efforts, the programs received a 25 percent budget increase over fiscal year 2001. In addition, Hinchey succeeded in earmarking \$100,000 to fund a pilot program in New York to implement wireless and other innovative Electronic Benefit Transfer systems that will allow farmers and farmers' markets to accept WIC coupons and food stamps. The Department of Agriculture has now released those funds to the state.

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides low-income women, infants and children with vouchers to purchase locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets during the local growing season. The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides the same service for low-income individuals who are at least 60 years old.

Eight hundred New York farmers and 239 farmers' markets in the state were certified under these programs in 2001. Almost 400,000 New Yorkers received vouchers and made almost \$6 million worth of purchases with them. Nationwide nearly 2.7 million recipients made purchases totaling over \$31 million. New York ranked highest in the country in total purchases under the programs.